A

SERMON

Preached before the

King & Queen

AT

WHITE-HALL,

March 23. $16\frac{89}{90}$.

By the Right Reverend Father in God
EDWARD Lord Biſhop of *Worceſter.*

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ECCLESIASTES xi. 9.

Rejoyce, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart chear thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the ſight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all theſe things God will bring thee into judgment.

IF *Solomon* had ſaid, *Rejoyce not, O young man, in thy Youth, neither let thy heart chear thee in the days of thy Youth; walk not in the way of thine heart, nor in the ſight of thine eyes; for know thou, that for all theſe things God will bring thee into Judgment*, the Senſe had been ſo eaſie and plain, that there had been no Appearance of Difficulty in reconciling one part with the other: For the whole had been look'd upon but as a neceſſary and ſeaſonable Admonition to ſuch who by the Heats of Youth, and Strength of Inclination, and Allurements of the World, are too apt to be tranſported with the Love of Senſual Pleaſures. And this had been very becoming the Wiſe Man towards the concluſion of his Book, wherein he had not onely before ſet forth the ſeveral Vanities of Hu-

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mane Life; but ſo ſoon after, bids Men
Ch. 12. 1. *Remember their Creatour in the days of their Youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh of which they ſhall ſay they have no pleaſure in them. i. e.* in the days wherein they are moſt apt to *walk in the way of their hearts, and in the ſight of their eyes.* For he knew very well, that nothing is ſo powerfull a Check and Reſtraint upon mens inclinations to Sin, as the ſerious conſideration of that God that gave them their Beings, and will bring them to an Account for their Actions.

But how then comes he in this Verſe to ſeem rather to give a Permiſſion to Young men in the time of Youth to indulge themſelves in their mirth and vanity? *Rejoyce, O young man, in thy Youth,* &c.

Some think that the Wiſe Man onely Derides and Expoſes them for their Folly in ſo doing; but that ſeems not agreeable with the grave and ſerious advice which follows. And we find nothing like *Irony* or *Sarcaſm* in any part of the foregoing Book; for he begins it with a Tragical Exclamation againſt
Ch. 1. 2. the vanities of humane life; *Vanity of vanities, ſaith the Preacher, vanity of vanities: all*

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is vanity. And he purſues his Argument by a particular induction of the moſt tempting and pleaſing vanities of Life; and particularly all ſorts of Senſual delights; as *Mirth* and *Jollity* in the firſt place, then *Wine* and *Muſick*, fine *Palaces*, curious *Vineyards*, *Gardens* and *Pools*, a great Retinue, and, which was needfull to maintain all this, *Abundance of Silver and Gold.* But what a melancholy reflection doth he make on all theſe Pleaſures of Life? *Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to doe; and behold all was vanity and vexation of ſpirit.* What incouragement then could the Wiſe Man, after ſo much experience of the World, give to Young men here in the Text, to *Rejoyce in the days of their Youth, and to walk in the way of their hearts, and in the ſight of their eyes?* i. e. to purſue *Vanity*, and to lay the Foundation for greater *vexation of Spirit*, when they come to reflect on their own Follies.

Ch. 2. 1. v. 3. v. 4, 5, 6, 7. v. 8. v. 11.

What then is the meaning of theſe words? For this, we are to obſerve, that the Preacher having declared his own main Scope and Deſign in the beginning and concluſion of his Book, brings in ſometimes the different

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ſenſes which mankind are apt to have concerning the Happineſs of Life. And that is the reaſon that we meet with ſuch different Expreſſions concerning it.

Ch. 8. 15. In one place it is ſaid, that *there is no better thing under the Sun, than to eat and drink and to be merry*; but in another, he ſaith, Ch. 7. 3. *Sorrow is better than laughter, and by the ſadneſs of the countenance the heart is made better.*

Ch. 9. 2. In one place he ſaith, *All things come alike to all, there is one event to the righteous and* Ch. 8. 12, 13. *to the wicked:* But in another, *That it ſhall be well with them that fear the Lord, but it ſhall not be well with the wicked.*

How can ſuch Paſſages as theſe be Reconciled, if we look on them as expreſſing the ſenſe of the ſame Perſon? But if we allow them to be the different notions of two ſorts of Men in this World, they are eaſie to be underſtood, although not to be reconciled. And the one ſort is of thoſe who place all Happineſs in this Life, without regard to Religion or Vertue, or another World; and the other of thoſe, who look on this Life onely as a Paſſage to Another; and that all Perſons ought to behave themſelves here, ſo as conduces moſt to their Happineſs hereafter.

And

And according to these different *Schemes*, we have in the words of the Text two very different sorts of Counsel and Advice to Young men.

I. The first proceeds upon the Supposition that all the Happiness of Man lies in this Life, and in the Enjoyment of the Sensual Pleasures of it; *Rejoyce, O young man, in thy Youth, and let thy heart chear thee in the days of thy Youth; and walk in the way of thy heart, and in the sight of thy eyes.* We have no other Rule here given but *the sight of the eye, and the way of the heart*; i. e. outward Appearance and inward Inclination; and these are the beloved Rules of the most Sensual and Voluptuous persons, and they judge of Happiness onely by the pursuit of them. Here is nothing mention'd of *Reason or Conscience*, or a regard to Vertue in the Restraint of Natural Inclinations: Nay, here is nothing of that Severity which *Epicurus* himself thought necessary towards the maintaining of a pleasant state of Life; which he granted could never be done without some restraint of Mens Appetites and Inclinations to the Pleasures of Sense; and it is not to be ima-

gined, that *Solomon* ſhould give Young men greater Liberty than the corrupteſt Moraliſts did. Therefore I cannot look upon theſe words as a *Permiſſion* for them to doe what is here expreſſed; but as a full Deſcription of that method of Living, which the jolly and voluptuous Corrupters of Youth would inſtruct them in, *Rejoyce, O young man, in thy Youth, and let thine heart chear thee*, &c.

II. We have here the moſt Powerfull Check and Reſtraint laid upon all theſe Senſual Inclinations of Youth. *But know thou that for all theſe things God will bring thee to Judgment.* Which Words are the Wiſe Man's *Correction* of the foregoing *Liberty*, or the Curb which Reaſon and Religion give to the purſuit of Natural Inclinations, wherein every Word hath its force, and ought to make a deep impreſſion upon us: For,

(1.) *Know thou:* Thine is not then the ſame caſe with Creatures that have no underſtanding; they are not capable of any Check from themſelves, having no Law of Reaſon or Conſcience within them to controul or govern their Senſual Deſires; but God hath given thee not meerly a Brutal Appetite,

Appetite, but a Rational Soul, capable of underſtanding the differences of Good and Evil, and the Reaſons why ſome things which appear Pleaſant are very diſagreeing to the Principles of Humane Nature; *i. e.* to that Order, Decency, Modeſty, and Regularity, which the more elevated frame and capacity of Mankind do require.

(2.) *For all theſe things*; as light and vain as you eſteem them, as ſoon as they are over and forgotten by you, as ſecretly and cloſely as they are committed, as much as you endeavour to palliate and excuſe them, yet but *for all theſe things God will certainly bring thee into Judgment.* Therefore you have all the reaſon in the world to conſider what you doe, ſince *every thing will be brought to judgment, whether it be good or evil*, as *Solomon* concludes this Book. Which ſhews the great Regard God hath to the Good or Evil of our Actions; and if the great Judge of the World hath ſo, certainly we ought to have it, and never think our ſelves at liberty to doe what we pleaſe, in gratifying our Luſts, and purſuing our Natural Inclinations to Evil. Ch. 12. 14.

(3.) *God will doe it.* If there were no *God* to call thee to an account, yet there are ſome Actions of Vertue ſo agreeable to Mankind, and ſome Vices ſo loathſome and deformed, that there would be ſufficient cauſe for them to love the one and to abhor the other. If we could ſuppoſe ſuch a frame of things and ſuch ſorts of Beings as we now ſee, and no God to make them, (which is moſt Abſurd and Unreaſonable,) yet we muſt ſuppoſe theſe Beings to have Natures and Properties diſtinct from each other; ſo that we could not imagine Men to become Beaſts, and therefore they muſt not act like them, but preſerve that *Decorum* or Agreeableneſs in their Actions which is ſuitable to the peculiar Excellencies of Humane Nature. And there are ſome Sins ſo much below the Dignity thereof, that no Circumſtances, no Suppoſitions, can make them fitting for Mankind to commit them; which ſhews that the Nature of Good and Evil is no Arbitrary thing, but is founded in the very frame of our Beings, and in the Reſpects we owe to our ſelves and to one another. And ſince there is an Infinite and Supreme Being which hath Abſolute Power and Command over us, and

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gives us both our Beings and the Comforts of our Lives, it is moſt Abſurd to ſuppoſe it not to be a fault to hate his Goodneſs, or to deſpiſe his Mercy; or to ſlight his Power, and to contemn his Authority: For in all theſe there is ſomething repugnant to the common ſenſe of Mankind, and to all Principles of true Honour and Juſtice. And there are ſuch common Principles of Morality ariſing from our neceſſary Relation to God and each other, which are of ſo clear and convincing Evidence, that every one that conſiders them will grant that Wicked Men may as well go about to diſpute their Beings as their Sins; and may as eaſily prove that they are not, but onely appear to be, as that no Actions are really Evil, but only by falſe Glaſſes appear ſo to be. But however vain men may deceive themſelves, *God will not be mocked*; for he not onely ſees and knows all our Actions, but he will bring us to an Account for them.

(4.) *God will bring thee into Judgment.* It is a dreadfull conſideration to a Sinner, that God knows all his falſe ſteps, all his ſecret Sins, all his Falſhood and Diſſimulation with God and Men: And there is nothing which men

men of Art and Deſign hate more, than to be diſcover'd and found out in all their double and deceitfull dealings; but to have theſe not onely privately diſcover'd, but expoſed and laid open to the view of the World; and not onely ſo, but to have every Circumſtance examin'd, and every Action ſcanned, and that by the great Judge of all the World, whom nothing can eſcape, nothing can deceive, nothing can withſtand; whoſe Juſtice is inflexible, whoſe Knowledge is incomprehenſible, whoſe Power is irreſiſtible, and whoſe Vengeance is inſupportable: This we cannot but imagine muſt ſtrike an awe and terrour into the Minds of Men, when they are purſuing the Pleaſures of Sin, that *for all theſe things God will bring them into judgment.* But notwithſtanding theſe and many other Expreſſions to the ſame purpoſe in Scripture, wherein *God* hath declared that
Act. 7. 31. he will certainly *Judge the World in Right-*
Rom. 2. 16. *ouſneſs* at the Great Day; that *the Secrets of*
2 Cor. 5. 10 *all hearts ſhall then be diſcloſed*; that *we muſt all appear before the Judgment-ſeat of Chriſt*;
Rom. 2. 6. and that *God will render to every man according to his Deeds:* And notwithſtanding it is a thing in it ſelf very reaſonable, from the conſi-

consideration of God's Justice and Providence, and the Nature and Consequences of Good and Evil Actions; yet the generality of Mankind go on as secure and careless as if there were no such thing, or that they ought not to be concerned about it. Therefore I shall not spend time in the Proof of that which I take for granted you all believe, and I am sure have Reason so to doe; but I shall enquire into these things which are most Practical and therefore proper for our Consideration at this Time.

(1.) How a matter of so great Importance as *a Judgment to come* makes so little Impression on the Minds of the generality of Mankind, who profess to believe it.

(2.) By what means the consideration of a Future Judgment may have a greater Influence on all our Minds.

(1.) How a thing of so great Importance as *God's bringing us into Judgment* comes to make so little Impression on the Minds of the generality of those who profess to believe it, when we are so tender and sensible of small things with Respect to this World.

For Resolving this, we must consider, that there

there is a great Difference between the Not Disbelieving Doctrinal Points of Faith, and the Practical Improvement of them in our Minds; without which, they remain there but as general and confused Notions. Thus too many who abhor being thought Atheists, live as if there were no God; not, that they deny or dispute his Being or Attributes, but they have no Regard to them in the last Dictates of their Minds, or in the Course of their Actions. To go about to prove such things to be true they look on as lost labour, for they do not question them; but there is another thing then which we are to give an Account of, *viz.* how it comes to pass, that so great and so weighty Doctrines, being received and allowed to be true, make so little Impression on the generality of Mankind; especially this of the Day of Judgment; of which these seem to be the main Reasons.

(1.) Mens Impatience of Considering great and weighty things at a Distance, which cannot affect and move our Senses.

(2.) The bewitching and stupifying Nature of Present and Sensual Pleasures; which draw off the Mind from greater things, and weaken

weaken all the Impreſſions they make upon us.

(3.) A General Preſumption upon God's Mercy towards Mankind on the Account of the Frailty of Humane Nature, notwithſtanding the ſeverity of his Threatnings in Scripture.

(1.) I begin with *Mens Impatience of Conſidering.*

We flatter and pleaſe our ſelves with the thoughts that we are *Intelligent* and *Conſidering Beings*, when, it may be, *Conſidering* (eſpecially as to matters of greateſt conſequence) is one of the things which Mankind have the greateſt Averſion to. For generally, they love to go no farther than the Outſides and Appearances of things, and have their Minds wholly poſſeſſed with falſe and flattering Imaginations, having neither Truth nor Conſiſtency in them. And thoſe who account themſelves of better Breeding than others, are often more impoſed upon than others in this way. The Pomp and Grandeur of the World, the Gaity and Splendour of Living ſtrikes their Fancies with ſuch vehement Impreſſions, that ſcarce any thing elſe gets into their Minds, or ſinks deep into them. There are many other things that ſeem to ſtand

fair in their Opinion at ſome times, but it is as they are thought Serviceable to Worldly Greatneſs and Honour.

This, after all the Inſtructions of Philoſophers, the Declamations of Heathen and Chriſtian Orators, and the far more Powerfull Arguments of the Wiſeſt and Beſt of Men, recorded in Holy Scripture, is ſtill the great *Idol* of Mankind, which they ſerve and worſhip with the trueſt and warmeſt Devotion. All other things, how great and weighty ſoever in themſelves, yet are really look'd on by them as a ſort of Metaphyſical Abſtracted Notions of things Inviſible and Immaterial, quite out of the reach of their Imagination, which may ſerve for the Amuſement of ſome, and the Affrightment of others, and the Entertainment of Speculative Minds; but, how to raiſe themſelves in the World, to appear Great, and have many Dependents; to purſue and carry on their own Intereſts (though without regard to Juſtice and Honeſty) theſe they account Great and Noble things, and fit to employ their Minds upon. But alas! How much are ſuch impoſed upon by meer *Shews* and *Appearances* of things, which are really what God

God made them, but are not what we fanſie them to be! There are, no doubt, real Conveniencies of Life in Riches, and Honour, and Eaſe, and Plenty, or elſe they could never be eſteemed Bleſſings, nor could we have reaſon to thank God for them; but there is a great difference between the Fitneſs of things for our preſent *uſe*, and for our *happineſs*; *i. e.* when we make them our End, and do not employ them in order to a farther End. But it is good Advice of S. *Paul*, *Uſing the World as not abuſing it*; *for the Faſhion of this World paſſeth away*: it *paſſes* like a Ship under Sail, while the generality of Mankind, like Paſſengers, lie aſleep in it. Sometimes when Storms ariſe, or Waves croſs them, they ſeem to be awake, and to look about them, and to think whither they are going; but thoſe thoughts being uneaſie to them, they lie down again, and are carried they know not whither. But ſtill it is but *the Faſhion of this World*; a meer Landskip, wherein there is great Variety but little Satisfaction, the Shew far out-doing the Subſtance. When the Devil ſhewed Chriſt *the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glory of them*, the higheſt Mountain could afford but

1 Cor. 7. 31.

Matt. 4. 8.

a ſmall Proſpect of them, but as ſome think he cauſed a Repreſentation in the Air of the moſt tempting Splendour and Glories of them. And this was the trueſt Repreſentation of them, by glorious Appearances and bewitching Shews. But unleſs there be ſomething in Humane Nature which makes it very apt to be deceived by ſuch things, it were ſtrange the Devil ſhould think to prevail on our Saviour by them. We pity thoſe who travelling in the Night are deceived by *falſe Fires* and *ſhining Meteors*, and follow them into Bogs and Precipices; but the caſe of ſuch is ſo much worſe who are deluded by the Deceitfull Vanities of this World to their own Deſtruction.

And can there be any greater Argument of the want of Conſideration, than for Perſons to ſuffer themſelves to be ſo eaſily and ſo fatally cheated? It is a Wiſe Obſervation of *Ariſtotle*, that *True Knowledge and Wiſedom lies moſt in ſettling and fixing the Mind*. For it is not the ſubtlety and fineneſs of Thoughts, not the quickneſs and ſharpneſs of Apprehenſion, not the cloſe and mathematical Deductions of Reaſon which make a Wiſe Man, but the having a calm and compoſed

Τὸ γὰρ ἠρεμήται καὶ στῆναι τὴν διάνοιαν, ἐπίστασθαι καὶ φρονεῖν λεγόμεθα. Nat. Auſc. *l.* 7. *c.* 4. *n.* 15.

poſed Temper of Mind, the ſubduing our Paſſions, and governing our Actions with reſpect to our Chief End. And in order to this, *Conſideration* is abſolutely neceſſary; without which that which is neareſt to us, and offers it ſelf firſt to our Choice, muſt prevail upon us. And here lies the main Difficulty to perſwade Mankind to chooſe a far greater Happineſs at a Diſtance and Inviſible, before a preſent Enjoyment of things we are conſtantly converſant with, and have made an early Impreſſion upon us. But ſtill we ſay, that it is nothing but *Mens Impatience of Conſidering*, which makes them have ſo little Regard to another Life. For if they would but lay both Worlds in the Balance one againſt the other, they would ſoon diſcover the wonderfull Folly of preferring that which this World accounts Happineſs before that which is offered to our Choice in another. For let us make all the fair and reaſonable Allowances that may be, as to our Inclinations, and Appetites, and Circumſtances in this World; as to the Diſtance, Obſcurity, Incomprehenſibleneſs of the Joys of another World; yet every conſidering man that regards true Happineſs will be ſure to chuſe that which is to come. For, (1.) Sup-

(1.) Supposing the Happiness were Equal, yet there is no proportion in the Continuance of them; and a considering Man will be sure to choose a Happiness that can never have an End, before one that may be irrecoverably lost in a moment; and can certainly be enjoyed but for a little time, if there were any certainty at all in the Enjoyment of it.

(2.) The more any have considered, the more they have repented placing too much of their Happiness here, because Reason and Experience shews them the Folly of it. But the more they have considered, the better satisfied the Minds of Good Men are in placing their Happiness above; where alone that Good is to be found which can make us truly Happy, and is to be enjoyed in that Fulness, that Purity, that Certainty which makes it fit for the wisest and most considering Men to prefer above a present Happiness, if it were to be enjoyed on Earth.

(3.) He that looks after a Future Happiness doth not thereby lose any of the Real Conveniencies of Humane Life; but he that places his Happiness here, cannot find it in this World, and is sure to be miserable in another:

another: And this makes a very conſiderable Difference in the Choice. Indeed, if God made it abſolutely neceſſary in order to Future Happineſs for us to forgoe all the Natural Pleaſures and Innocent Delights of this Life, the terms would be much harder, and hardly poſſible to Humane Nature. For, if all Pleaſures of Senſe muſt be renounced, we muſt not ſee the pleaſing varieties of Nature, nor hear the melodious ſound of Birds, nor taſt the Meat when we are hungry, nor drink when we are thirſty; for there is really greater Pleaſure of Senſe when Nature craves neceſſary Suſtenance, than what the moſt voluptuous *Epicurean* enjoys in all his Contrivances, firſt to raiſe his Appetite, and then to pleaſe it: For what is moſt natural and neceſſary is the moſt Delightfull; every thing of *Force* muſt have ſomething *Uneaſie* in it. But God hath not dealt thus hardly with Mankind; He allows us all the reaſonable Deſires of Nature, and hath onely forbid us what is unreaſonable and unneceſſary. And upon the forbearance of what is ſo, joyned with our entire dependence upon himſelf for it, (which the Scripture calls *Faith working by Love*,) he hath made the Gracious Offer of Eternal

Gal. 5. 6.

Eternal Happineſs. It is true, in Extraordinary Caſes of Perſecution he requires more, but then he propoſes Extraordinary Rewards to make abundant Recompence for them; but in the common and ordinary Caſe of Mankind, he requires no more than our avoiding thoſe Exceſſes in Pleaſing our Appetites which Nature and Reaſon condemn. And thoſe who conſider, cannot but ſee how unreaſonable it is to place their Happineſs in forbidden Pleaſures; and to think that nothing can make them happy, but what God hath declared ſhall make them miſerable. It is a ſtrange Croſsneſs in our Deſires, if nothing can pleaſe them but what diſpleaſes God. It were no hard task to ſhew, that God forbids nothing but what is really repugnant to our Well-being here; and how then can any ſuch thing as Happineſs be hoped for in ſuch things? And when a man ventures being Miſerable for ever, for what can never make him Happy here, if he had his full Liberty to purſue his Deſires; he ſhews how far he is from acting like a wiſe, rational, conſidering Being. So that Impatience of Conſidering is one great Reaſon why the thoughts of a Judgment to come make ſo little Impreſſion on Mens Minds.

(2.) The

(2.) The Second Reaſon is *the Bewitching and Stupifying Nature of Senſual Pleaſures.* The *Epicurean* Philoſophers, who managed the *Theory* of Pleaſure with the greateſt Art, ſo as it might look like a proper happineſs for Mankind, found Two things abſolutely neceſſary in order to it.

(1.) The Retrenching all inordinate Deſires, *viz.* ſuch as had more Pain following them, than there was Pleaſure in the Enjoyment of them.

(2.) The Removing the Fears of another World out of Mens Minds. For as long as theſe ſunk into their Minds, they muſt rob them of that inward Tranquillity, without which it were a vain thing ſo much as to talk of Happineſs. But it was impoſſible, upon their Grounds, to doe either of theſe. For,

(1.) It is unreaſonable to ſuppoſe that the Happineſs of our preſent Life ſhould conſiſt in the Enjoyment of Pleaſure, and yet the Pleaſure of Opinion to be taken away, ſince the *Pleaſure* of *Opinion* is the far greateſt part of the *Pleaſure* of Life; and that which is as much valued and eſteemed by all thoſe who place their Happineſs in Pleaſure. If it were all to be reduced to that which lies in ſatisfy-

ing the neceſſary Deſires of Nature, then ſuch as have juſt enough for that, are far more happy than the Rich and Voluptuous, becauſe they have leſs Pains and Care. But if any allowance be made to the *Pleaſure* of *Fancy* and *Opinion*, then no ſtop can be given to inordinate Deſires. For, who can ſet bounds to Fancy, or lay a reaſonable Reſtraint upon Deſires, if the Differences of Good and Evil be taken away? As they muſt be, if meer Pleaſure and Pain be to be regarded in our Actions.

(2.) As to the other, the Methods they uſed to remove all Fears of another World were weak and trifling, and they had no Advantage in Point of *Argument*, but what the Ignorance and Folly of the Idolatrous part of Mankind at that time gave them. But there is a far greater advantage in point of *Intereſt*, which makes men of Senſual Lives very willing to be rid of the Fears of another Life. And a willing mind goes a great way in believing or not believing. Thoſe who place their Happineſs in eating and drinking well (as they call it) and other Senſual Delights, which can never be enjoyed when this Life is ended, have but a melancholy Proſpect

Proſpect into another World; for they are ſhut out from the very poſſibility of being happy in their own Senſe, (unleſs they would believe the Eaſtern Impoſtour;) but when they once come to apprehend that there is no Pleaſure to make them happy but what is ſeated in the Body, they are apt to conclude that when that dies, there is an end of all, for their Imaginations can reach no farther. And the true Reaſon is, they have laid Reaſon and Conſcience aſleep ſo long, that it is very hard to awaken them; their Notions of good and Evil are like the confuſed Apprehenſions of Men half awake; they ſee enough to perplex but not enough to ſatisfie them. And when their Fears grow upon them, they have not the Heart and Courage to Examine them, whether they be Reaſonable or not; but rather chooſe to return to their former *Opiates*, than undergo the trouble of an Effectual Cure by a hearty Repentance and *coming to themſelves*, as the Prodigal Son in the Parable did, when his Hardſhip had brought him to Conſideration. We do not know what had become of him, if he had been wiſe and frugal in his Pleaſures; if he had taken care of a good ſtock and a Luke 15.17.

plentifull Subsistence; but he first came to be pinched with want, before he was awakened to Repent. But we have in Scripture a more remarkable Instance of the Stupifying Nature of Sensual Pleasures; and that was in *David* after his Sins of Adultery and Murther. It is a Wonder, how a Man of such a tender Conscience in other things, should contiuue so long under the Guilt of these Enormities, without being awakened to Repentance: Did he not know these to be great Sins? And did not his Conscience charge him with the Guilt of them? How came he then to need a Prophet to be sent to him, and to deal so plainly with him, as to
2 Sam. 12. 7. tell him *Thou art the Man?* But this is a plain Evidence, how much the Pleasures of Sin are apt to stupifie Mens Consciences so far, that unless God by his Grace be pleased to awaken them thoroughly, they never come to a sincere and hearty Repentance. *David* saw nothing more as to the Guilt of his Sins, when he penn'd his 51*st Psalm*, than his own Reason and Natural Conscience might inform him before; but he had quite another Sense of his Sins then; his *Heart was broken* and his Soul *wounded* under the

the Apprehenſion of God's Diſpleaſure; and this makes him pray ſo earneſtly and ſo importunately to God for the Pardon of his Sins. And if it were thus in the caſe of a Man otherwiſe *after God's own heart, i. e.* afraid of offending him, and carefull to pleaſe him; what may we imagine it to be in thoſe who in the time of Youth *walk in the way of their hearts, and in the ſight of their eyes: i. e.* allowing themſelves in all Senſual Inclinations, and purſuing Carnal Delights ſo far till they have loſt all Senſe of God and another World; and ſuch as theſe, nothing but the Powerfull Influences of Divine Grace can awaken and recover.

(3.) The Third Reaſon is, *A General Preſumption upon God's Mercy.* The firſt thing which Sinners, in the Heat of their Youth, and Purſuit of their Luſts, aim at, is to think as little as may be of what they are doing, or what will be the Conſequence of their Actions. For every thought of themſelves is very uneaſie to them, and every thought of God is much more ſo; therefore they drive away all ſuch thoughts by one means or other, by Sleep, Diverſion, Company, and ſuch Publick Entertainments, as rather

rather heighten and inflame their Vices than correct them.

If all this will not doe, but there will be ſome Melancholy Hours, wherein Conſcience begins to rouſe it ſelf, and to awaken the Sinner to ſome Senſe of his Folly; then he is ready to hearken with Pleaſure to any Raileries againſt *Religion and Morality*; and admires the Wit of any one who dares ſay a bold and ſharp thing againſt the Wiſdom of all Ages, and of the beſt Men in them. And one or two ſuch Sayings, without Proof, are cried up as far beyond the beſt Rules of Morality, or the Evidence of natural and revealed Religion. Any Sceptical Diſputes are ſufficient Demonſtrations to them; and the moſt unreaſonable Cavils againſt Religion are embraced, becauſe againſt the thing they hate; and even a Jeſt againſt the Day of Judgment ſhall ſignifie more with them, than the ſtrongeſt Arguments in the World to prove it. The true Reaſon is, they love their Vices, and hate every thing which makes them uneaſie to them; and nothing doth more ſo, than the thoughts of a Judgment to come.

But

But ſuppoſe after all, the terrible and frequent Expreſſions of Scripture concerning the Day of Judgment, joyned with the Reaſonableneſs of the thing, do make ſuch Impreſſion on their Minds that they cannot wholly ſhake off the Fears and Apprehenſions of it, then their laſt endeavour is to mitigate and leſſen them, from a *General Preſumption of God's Mercifull Nature*; and therefore they are willing to ſuppoſe, that however God, to keep the World in awe, hath threatned them with the dreadfull Severities of the Great Day, yet as a tender Father who threatens his Diſobedient Son, in order to reclaim him, with no leſs than Diſinheriting him for ever; yet when it comes to Execution he may Relent, not from his Sons Deſerts, but his own Compaſſion; ſo they hope, or believe, (or are willing to doe ſo) that God at the Great Day will not proceed according to the rigour which he hath threatned to uſe. And to comfort themſelves in theſe hopes they find out all poſſible Extenuations of their Sins: "If we, ſay they, had been created purely "intellectual Beings, free from this load of "Fleſh, and the Inclinations which are natu-"ral to it, then it had been more reaſonable "to have called us to a ſtrict Account for e-"very

" very Action of our Lives; for then every
" Inclination to Evil must have come from
" our Minds; but now our Bodies corrupt
" and draw them aside; and the Inclinations
" to Evil grow faster than our Reason,
" which should check and restrain them.
" And when those Inclinations are strongest,
" Men have not that Judgment which is ne-
" cessary to the Government of unruly Passi-
" ons. So that the very frame of humane
" Nature seems to plead for Sins committed
" in the Heat and Violence of Youth. Be-
" sides, such is the Strictness and Purity of
" the Law of God, and so great the Weak-
" ness and Disability, the Ignorance and In-
" advertency of Mankind, that if God will
" make no Allowance for humane Frailty,
" who can stand before his Tribunal? And,
" if any Allowance be made for Sins of Infir-
" mity, there are so many Abatements to
" be made for Sins committed through sud-
" den Passion, through Mistake, through the
" unavoidable Impotency of humane Nature
" in this degenerate Condition, that the Se-
" verity of that Day is not much to be fea-
" red.

This is the utmost of the Sinners Plea against the Severity of the Day of Judgment; But,

But, to ſhew how faulty it is, I ſhall offer theſe Conſiderations;

1. That God will certainly *Judge the World in Righteouſneſs*; and therefore none ſhall have Cauſe to complain of the Harſhneſs or Severity of his Proceedings. For, this *Righteouſneſs* is not the Rigour of Juſtice, but that Equity which hath a Regard to the Circumſtances of Actions, and the Abatement and Extenuation of Faults which ariſe from them. Acts 17. 31.

2. None ſhall ſuffer at that Day, but for their wilfull Impenitency, and obſtinate Continuance in Sin. For, this is not onely agreeable to the Mercifull Nature of God, to forgive Repenting Sinners; but it is one of the great Deſigns of the Goſpel to aſſure Mankind of it by the higheſt Teſtimonies, even by the Death and Reſurrection of the Son of God, and all the Miracles wrought in Confirmation of it, and of the Truth of his Doctrine.

3. There are ſeveral Degrees of Wilfulneſs and Obſtinacy, and Mens Judgment ſhall be according to them. Some Mens Capacities, Opportunities and Helps have very much exceeded others; ſome have broken through ſtronger Convictions and more powerfull Aſſiſtences of Grace than others; ſome have

had more early Inſtructions, more frequent Warnings, more obliging Favours from Heaven than others. And as it is reaſonable that Perſons ſuffer for their Obſtinate Continuance in Sin, ſo that they ſhould ſuffer according to the Degrees and Circumſtances of it.

(4.) It is no unjuſt Severity in God, to deprive Men of that Happineſs which they have wilfully refuſed; and to condemn them to that Miſery which their Sins have deſerved. Hath not God made the moſt condeſcending Offer of Mercy and Salvation, that it is poſſible for Creatures to expect from him, after ſo many and great Provocations? Could Heaven ſtoop lower than it hath done to vile and ungratefull Sinners? When the Son of God came down from Heaven on purpoſe to reconcile God and Man together; When the Spirit of God warns and excites their minds to the Conſideration of their Eternal Welfare; When *the Meſſengers of this Reconciliation are to woo and intreat and beſeech Sinners in Chriſt's ſtead, as though God did beſeech them by them, that they would be reconciled to God*; When the *Patience and Goodneſs and Long-ſuffering of God* is exerciſed ſo much on purpoſe *to lead them*

them to Repentance; When God inſtead of perfect Obedience, is willing to pardon and paſs by ſo many Offences, if they truly Repent of them, and to receive them ſtill into his Favour and Mercy; When after all this men do rather prefer the preſent Pleaſures of Sin, before all that happineſs which God ſo freely offers, is it any Injuſtice in him to ſuffer them for ever to be deprived of that which they ſo wilfully, ſo ungratefully, ſo obſtinately refuſed? And ſuppoſing the Souls of Men to ſubſiſt in another World free from all thoſe Clouds of Errour and Miſtake, and the falſe Notions they are deceived by here, as well as all the Diverſions and Pleaſures of this Life, it is not to be imagined, but they muſt for-ever ſuffer an intolerable Anguiſh within (called, *A Worm that never dyes, and a Fire that never goes out*,) from the Reflexions upon their own Folly. What Vengeance beyond this God may inflict, we now know not, (may none of us ever know it!) but we are ſure it will never exceed the proportion and deſert of their Sins. Which is ſufficient to clear the Juſtice of God in his Proceedings with Mankind in the Day of Judgment. Mark 9. 44.

2. It remains now onely to ſhew by what means God's bringing us to Judgment may

make a deeper Impreſſion upon our Minds; By conſidering theſe two things;

1. That our not conſidering it will not make our condition better, but much worſe.

2. That our Conſidering it is the beſt means to prevent the evil Conſequences of it.

(1.) Our not conſidering it will not make our Condition better. There were great Reaſon indeed *to walk in the way of our hearts, and in the ſight of our eyes*, and never trouble our ſelves with what will happen at the great Day, if the putting it out of our Heads would make our Accounts the eaſier when it comes. But alas! Whether we think of it or no, the Account runs on, and we muſt anſwer to every particular at laſt; and how unprovided ſhall we be, if we ſpend no time here in examining, ſtating and clearing of them as far as we are able. It is a mighty Priviledge we have by the Goſpel, that God allows us to clear our Accounts with him in this World; *For, if we would judge our ſelves we ſhall not be judged*: *i.e.* If we call our ſelves to a ſtrict Account for our Actions; if we Repent heartily and ſincerely of our Sins; if we ſeek earneſtly to God for Mercy; if we have *our Conſciences cleanſed by the Blood of Chriſt* from the pollution of our Sins, then we may

1 Cor. 11. 31.

with

with Joy and Peace in our Minds think of the Great Day of Recompence. But if we never enter into our Selves, to ſearch and examine our own Actions, never look into the Habits of our own Minds, nor charge our ſelves with the Guilt of the Sins we have committed, how can we ever hope to eſcape the Scrutiny or avoid the Severity of that Day? For our Account continually increaſes by our neglect of it, and the burden of God's Wrath muſt be ſo much heavier when we have taken no care to leſſen it, but *after our hardneſs and impenitent hearts have onely treaſured up wrath againſt the day of wrath.* Rom. 2. 5.

(2.) Our conſidering that God will bring us to Judgment is the beſt means to prevent the evil Conſequences of it. For, although we cannot hope to plead Innocency; yet, (which is next in point of Wiſdom) this is the moſt effectual Motive to bring us to Repentance: And that which makes us Repent makes us to grow Wiſe in time, and to lay *a good Foundation for Eternal Life.* There are many Arguments to induce us to it in the Folly and Shame of our Sins; the Wiſdom of Reflection and Reformation; the Inſtances of it and Exhortations to it recorded in Scripture; but there is none more

ſenſible and which touches Men more in point of Intereſt and Concernment than this of *a Judgment to come.* "Muſt I then, ſaith "a Penitent Sinner, give a ſtrict Account to "God of all the evil Actions of my Life, "and ſuffer according to the Deſert of them "if I die in Impenitency? How much doth "it then concern me to Repent betimes, to "Repent in good earneſt, to Repent while "there is hopes of Mercy! Away then all "ye deceitfull Vanities of this wicked World, "ye have too long deceived and ſeduced "me: what will all this vain ſhew, this bu-"ſie Seducer, this impertinent Outſide of the "World ſignifie, when I muſt be ſtript of "all, and ſtand guilty and accuſed by my "own Conſcience before the Judgment-Seat "of Chriſt? Oh! how wretched ſhall I be, "if my Conſcience condemns me before the "Sentence of the Judge! Therefore, I "am reſolved to prevent the Judgment of "that Day; I will accuſe, judge, and con-"demn my ſelf; nay, I will proceed to Ex-"ecution, as to all the vitious Habits and "corrupt Inclinations within me. And al-"though I cannot wholly *mortifie* them, yet "I will *crucifie* them; *i. e.* nail them to the "Croſs, and allow them no longer Liberty;

and

" and albeit they may ſtruggle for a time, " yet I will never give way to their Domini- " on over me any more; that ſo Death and " Judgment may find me prepared, if not " with unſpotted Innocency, yet with hearty " and ſincere Repentance.

To conclude all; let the Conſideration of this Day of *Judgment to come* enter deep into our Minds, and awaken us out of our Lethargy and Security. We are very apt to put off unpleaſing things from time to time, and to paſs away our time here as eaſily as may be. But this is no part of Wiſdom, and we ſhall extremely blame our ſelves for it one time or other. The beſt we can do now, is to recover what is paſt by Repentance, and to ſet our ſelves to the making up our Accounts with God in this World: For, we are all walking on the brink of Eternity, and know not how ſoon we may drop into it. But what Eternal Horrour and Confuſion muſt follow us, if we go on to ſlight the Opportunities he ſtill affords us of making our Peace with him who is to be our Judge? May God therefore of his Mercy awaken us all to a timely and ſerious Repentance, and then *our Iniquities ſhall not be our Ruine.*

F I N I S.